DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 128 SO 024 612

AUTHOR Wronski, Todd
TITLE Explaining Our Dreams: The Artist's Role in the Evaluation of Educational Arts Programs.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 15p.
AVAILABLE FROM Department of Dramatic Arts, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA 17013.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Art Education; *Artists; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Evaluators; *Fine Arts; Mission Statements; *Program Evaluation

ABSTRACT

As educators become increasingly subject to accountability pressures, maximizing the worth of evaluation is a prudent and realistic stance. This paper suggests useful and valid art program evaluation models: (1) Stufflebeam's (1971) CIPP (context, input, process, and product) model; (2) Stake's Countenance Model (responsive evaluation); (3) McClean's (1975) model which looks at total school content as context for the arts; and (4) Kushner's (1987) open conversations with audiences and participants as a qualitative evaluation model. The staff of an arts program undergoing outside evaluation should: (1) clarify general goals of the program and articulate a philosophical vision unifying the program staff as much as possible behind these goals; (2) take an active role in the selection of an evaluator; (3) clearly articulate the program to the evaluator; and (4) help the evaluator make an accurate translation of artistic concepts into the final report language. Articulation and accountability of the art program may result in increased recognition for the arts. Contains 16 references. (MM)

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EXPLAINING OUR DREAMS: The Artist's Role in the Evaluation of Educational Arts Programs

Todd Wronski
Department of Dramatic Arts
Dickinson College
Carlisle, PA 17013

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> "(The arts) plainly have been among man's most effective means of expression and a fundamental part of his value system for thousands of years, whether local or nation guidelines say so or not. Do we really need research to tell us that all over again?" (Morrison, 1975, pg. 74)

Who among the community of arts educators cannot identify with the above statement made by the former director of the Arts in Education Program for the John D. Rockefeller, III fund? In this to-the-point statement, Jack Morrison articulates the frustration many artists feel living in an increasingly product-valuing society. The arts have never been fertile ground for researchers intent on demonstrating the "worth" of educational programs through empirical data and traditional quantitatively-based methods. As the demands for such justification has spread through the educational community, those in arts education have been among the most actively resistant. And to a large degree, they have been successful, at least at some levels. While secondary programs were increasingly subjected to state-mandated objectively based evaluation through the 60s and 70s, colleges and universities remained relatively unaffected. Writing in 1968, Henry S. Dyer commented:

> "The . . .concept of testing (in the arts) is valid and laudable; it is one that in more hortatory moods I myself have urged. But it is an ideal that at the moment seems so far from realization in practice that its impact . . . is probably negligible." (Dyer, 1968, pg. 85)

This insulated position enjoyed by higher education has undergone substantial change through the 1980s as economic and political circumstances have combined to create an environment where calls for accountability are increasingly heard,

especially at the upward end of the educational spectrum. Much of the blame (credit?) for this movement can be given to the increasing prevalence of managers compared to leaders in the education hierarchy; but certainly the call for a more detached, if not to say objective, view of the arts is nothing new, nor is it confined to the educational establishment. As far back as Kant's Critique of Judgement, a case was being made that objective approaches to aesthetic issues could be devised. Social theorist Alvin Toffler makes the point that "no system of social accounting could possibly be complete without indicators of the cultural life of the nation." (Toffler, 1970, pg. 53)

Like it or not, educators in the arts at all levels are increasingly subject to the environment of accountability. Whether couched in terms such as "outcomes evaluation", or baldfacedly presented by an administrator as a need to "figure out what you're doing and if you're worth it", arts educators must learn to face some very challenging, unfamiliar and perhaps unwanted "music." Given these realities of public education entering the 1990s, three basic procedural alternatives present themselves:

1. Fight evaluation initiatives.
2. Ignore evaluation initiatives.
3. Actively work to maximize the evaluation's worth.

It is this paper's premise that upon examination of these choices, the third is clearly the most prudent and realistic.

Laura Chapman addressed the dilemma facing the arts educator in responding to evaluation initiatives. She writes pointedly about the fiscal assumptions that can underlie many calls for evaluation.

> "Surely it is morally wrong and potentially dangerous for 'the state' to measure worth of human behavior and achievement in monetary terms. The greatest wrong of the cost accounting movement is the belief that purely rational decision are appropriate, efficient and accurate. Our

> moral and professional integrity demands that we say no to (these) efforts." (Chapman, 1973, pg. 111)

Although some might ask for more restrained language, few arts educators would disagree with Chapman's emphasis on professional ethics in looking at the situation. It is important that the arts educator not forget (or ignore) the very qualities that make the arts so unique and valuable. The impulse to do this, to throw an artificially woven blanket of pseudo-objectivity over the arts, is a tempting one; many (probably most) administrators would prefer this if for no other reason than it is the approach with which they are most familiar. Braskamp and Brown warn against this course of action.

> "If art education is viewed (only) as an enculturation process. . .assessment of cognitive outcomes is generally not a problem. Indeed, it may be too easy." (Braskamp and Brown, 1975, pg. 68)

The arts educator must resist such temptation, but they must also resist the other temptation implied by Chapman: the urge to simply dig in one's heels and summon all the negative energy available to fight the whole <u>idea</u> of evaluation, which in many cases is becoming inevitable in some form or other.

By fighting the entire concept of evaluation, or worse by simply ignoring it, the artist/educator may be abdicating whatever influence he/she may have over the evaluation process, thus increasing the odds of an inaccurate or spurious evaluation being conducted. Braskamp and Brown are strenuous advocates of artist involvement in any evaluation process.

> "If artists are convinced that an accountability plan which uses objective test measures and student behavioral changes will be inadequate and incomplete, they should be prepared to propose alternative plans." (Braskamp and Brown, 1975, pg. 65).

The degree of confidence in the idea of formal evaluation may vary from passionate cynicism to resigned acceptance (perhaps even so far as a semi-enthusiastic

welcome?) depending on the artist/teachers involved, but the argument regarding the need for involvement in the process on the part of the artist is a compelling one.

> "Willingness to demonstrate accountability does not necessarily mean a benign acceptance of a plan devised by only one party . . . The artist should not allow the evaluator to solely decide which criteria to assess." (Braskamp and Brown, 1975, pg. 65, 69)

THE ARTS AND THE DEVELOPING FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION

If the arts are to be taken (perhaps kicking and screaming) into the era of accountability, its practitioners can take some comfort in the fact that the field of educational evaluation shows signs of willingness to meet the arts halfway. As evaluation has distinguished itself from the field of research-based educational measurement, many leaders have brought forth provocative evaluation models. As far back as 1964, researchers Berelson and Steiner reinforced the need for such models with their observations regarding the arts and traditional testing procedures.

> "Among artists, the correlation between rated quality of work and measured intelligence is zero or slightly negative." (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, pg. 228-229)

Spurred on by such findings, the 1970s were characterized by the introduction of new evaluation methodologies oriented toward qualitative processes rather than the quantitative research of measurement specialists. Not only were these methods more applicable to the arts, some of them seemed to demonstrate a particular affinity with the artistic mindset. Elliot W. Eisner (1975) articulated the concept of "educational connoisseurship", comparing it to the function served by a theatre or art critic. Robert Stake made a similar comparison to the art critic, comparing the qualities of a work of art to an educational program.

> "A work of art has no single true value. A(n) (arts) program has no single true value." (Stake, 1975, pg. 25)

Given the work of these and other pioneers in qualitative evaluation, the looming specter of an evaluative establishment dominated by behavioral scientists and objective data collection began to recede. In fact, arts advocate Morrison reflected a growing confidence in educational evaluation, stating "The professional evaluator . . . is more aware than anyone of the quicksilver nature of evaluating arts projects." (Morrison, 1975, pg. 73)

Out of this climate came several evaluation models which should be considered by any arts program undergoing mandated formal evaluation. Among the best known of these is former music teacher Daniel Stufflebeam's (1971) CIPP model. Its acronym name is derived from the four procedural steps included in the model: analysis of context, input, process and product. Although this model has been employed very effectively to facilitate management decision making in business and other quantitative areas, its flexibility allows it to serve as the basis for an effective evaluation of an arts program. Especially in the areas of context and process evaluation, the CIPP plan allows for introduction of detailed qualitative description that, if effectively conveyed, can result in an informed, useful evaluation. But it is important that an outside evaluator be made <u>completely</u> cognizant of the unique context and processes of the arts.

> "The (evaluator) may need to be made aware of the specific role of the artist in education. The obligation is the artist's . . .(who) cannot afford to be made silent." (Braskamp and Brown, 1975, pg. 65)

One of the foremost leaders of the effort to develop evaluation models suitable for the arts, Robert Stake presented the idea of "responsive evaluation" as

> "An educational evaluation . . . orient(ed) more directly to program activities than to program intents; responding to audience requirements for information; (where) different value perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success or failure of the program." (Stake, 1975, pg. 14)

In establishing a structure for such an evaluation, Stake developed a "matrix" system whereby the intents, observation, standards and judgments of a program would be developed in three categories chronologically labeled Antecedents (conditions existing prior to training), Transactions (the instruction process) and Outcomes. Later given the title "Countenance Model" by Stake, this system has considerable applicability to an artistic program, its chief advantages being its clarity and comprehensiveness. Use of the Countenance Model could be quite helpful in situations where evaluation credibility is likely to be questioned; its specific and somewhat technical presentation belies its flexibility and adaptability to artistic needs.

One of the most intriguing approaches to the evaluation of art programs was presented by Leslie D. McClean (1975). It is particularly attractive to artists in that she proposes that the evaluator look at the total school content; that the evaluation focus on how hospitable the school as a total institution is to the arts. While this focus may not be the favorite of administrative audiences, McClean's is one of the few models to acknowledge that the arts program does not exist in a vacuum. Just as no artistic institution can thrive without a supportive community, no educational program can thrive without a supportive school environment.

McClean presents guidelines that help an evaluator determine "observable features of the school which (may) reveal appreciation for, or neglect of, the arts". First among her four categories is the total school environment. McClean urges evaluators to thoroughly look through the entire school. Is art displayed (outside of art classrooms)? Is it numerous or scarce? What is its quality both in terms of technique and originality? Does it reflect vital activity of engaged student minds?

The McClean model outlines similar guiding questions related to arts workspace, arts program output, and direct school support for art programs.

Obviously a mandated evaluation which utilized only this model in its information gathering would probably have severe credibility problems. But as a complementary approach to an otherwise formulaic evaluation, McClean's ideas certainly have merit and would in all likelihood prove to be a valuable component of any arts program evaluation.

Given the amount of activity and exploration in the field of arts evaluation that occurred during the 1970's, it is notable that a search of sources through the 1980s reveals very little new literature. Guba and Lincoln (1981) have presented clear and articulate methods for qualitative evaluation, as did Patton (1987); but work specifically addressed to the arts is minimal.

One recent essay should give heart to arts educators because of its fresh, unpretentious presentation and its common-sense, sensitive conclusions. British evaluator Saville Kushner observes that "really potent evaluations are embodied in conversations with audiences and participants." (Kushner, 1987, pg. 228) Although many artists may claim they don't need a distinguished expert to point out the value of conversation, Kushner's emphasis on this emergent, open-ended process of data collection does indicate the distance the evaluation mainstream has traveled toward developing methods compatible with subjective disciplines such as the arts and humanities.

Kushner also raises a flag of caution that should be carefully heeded by all evaluators - especially those unfamiliar with the personal and emotional nature of work in the creative arts. The ease with which the well-intentioned evaluator may be drawn in to the personalities and energy surrounding creative work is emphasized.

> "Evaluating innovations in the arts starts with holding conversations - interviews that have an evaluative bite to them . . .(but) it is hard to hold such conversations whilst maintaining a professional distance." (Kushner, 1987, pg. 223)

While Kushner describes the unique challenges of arts evaluation, the positive side of working with a generally gregarious group of people is also acknowledged. Kushner finds that "much of the evaluation is conducted by the participants, and my role is simply to ease conversation, edit and publish." (Kushner, 1987, pg. 220) In a concise statement regarding the nature of evaluating arts programs, Kushner says simply "This is an intimate form of research."

Evaluating the arts is a challenging proposition. Morrison outlines a few of the many things an evaluator must do well.

> "Honest reporting (of artistic evaluation) takes imagination and insightful interpretation with great integrity. It means the use and respect of subjective data carefully collected and ordered. It means demystifying objective data in the subjective realm of feelings." (Morrison, 1975, pg. 75)

Whether any mere mortal is up to such a task is debatable, and many arts educators are quick to agree with the evaluators who candidly admitted that "the truly objective judge (of the arts) is often the passage of time". (Braskamp and Brown, 1975, pg. 59) But assuming that father/mother time is not available, and the local school board or state education department is still insisting on a formal program evaluation, the arts educator must be prepared to maximize the benefit (or minimize the damage) of any such process.

THE ARTISTS' ROLE IN PROGRAM EVALUATION

When faced with the prospect of a mandated outside evaluation, many artists' first impulse is to flee. It is of absolute importance that this urge not be given in to. Such evaluations are an increasingly common aspect of the trend toward overt

educational accountability, and despite the pleas from subjectively oriented disciplines, they seem to be here to stay in the foreseeable future - especially in the public secondary schools and increasingly in state run university systems. The artist must develop a set of "coping skills" to maximize the influence he/she can bring to bear on the process.

Toward that end, four distinct areas of activity are recommended to the staff of an arts program undergoing outside evaluation:

1. Clarify general goals of the program and articulate a philosophical vision, unifying the program staff as possible behind these goals.
2. Take an active role in the selection of an evaluator.
3. Clearly articulate the program to the evaluator.
4. Help the evaluator make an accurate translation of artistic concepts into the final report language.

Many artists find the idea of a "mission statement" to be trivial, aggravating or even odious. This reactionary smokescreen obscures the fact that these negative feelings are often a function of the incredible difficulty encountered in articulating such a statement. It is extremely difficult to devise a concise, non-jargonistic statement that accurately conveys even the slightest essence of such a complex and personal process as creativity. The difficulty of explaining the process is in itself an exhortation to do so, for if it is difficult for the artist to articulate the process, pity the conscientious outside evaluator who nobly (and in all likelihood unsuccessfully) struggles to capture a program's essence based on a short on-site visit. Dyer conveys the frustration felt by many professional evaluators who encounter ambiguity at all levels of the arts education hierarchy, stating the "dimensions of (expected artistic) achievement are still largely undefined in the minds of professors' (Dyer, 1968, pg. 91)

Clarification of general goals are a practical imperative for an effective evaluation, but artists should also perceive the innate benefits that may accrue from the time taken to consolidate artistic vision. As art educator Bennett Reimer argues, "Arts programs need a long range philosophical vision clearly articulated and generally shared". (Reimer, 1980, pg. 120) All too often in the arts, individuals become so caught up in the creativity or deadline pressures of artistic work that philosophical thought becomes a luxury they feel they cannot afford. An outside evaluation can be used as a "stick" to encourage pursuit of this "carrot" that often slips from view outside of the staff's artistic blinders.

It should be emphasized that any mission statement should grow out of the thought and feelings of the artists themselves; no attempt should be place to overlay the particular lexicon of the professional education industry. Behavioral objectives subdivided into decimal groupings not only will turn program staff off, they also may reinforce the prejudices of an evaluator. Arts educators should realize, however, that if they fail to define goals on their <u>own</u> terms, a system such as behavioral objectives is more likely to be imposed on them.

Perhaps no step in the evaluation process is more important than selection of an evaluator, and artists need not be a passive party in this process. In most cases, the first step would be to advocate a "connoisseurial" or expertise-oriented (Worthen and Sanders, 1987) model, with experts being nominated by the arts program staff. Should administration demand a more traditional approach, artists should take an active role in identifying evaluation professionals knowledgeable about and sympathetic to models such as those outlined earlier. All evaluators are not equal or alike and any investment of artist' time used to identify an appropriate evaluator will, in all likelihood, be effort extremely well spent.

Once an evaluator is hired, an arts program must dedicate itself to communicating clearly to the evaluator its nature and goals. If clarification of goals has taken place prior to the hiring of the evaluator, this should be possible; if not this may be a difficult and inefficient, if not impossible, process. A special point should be made here: if an evaluator of low artistic credibility is forced on a program, the need for patient and clear program articulation becomes more pronounced. This is emphasized here because human nature reinforces the opposite; we are much more inclined to talk at length with people who understand (and approve of) us than we are with people who are more ignorant of the facts and value behind our work. It is of crucial importance that this instinct be consciously overcome in the case of an assigned evaluator who is inappropriate or inadequate. To ignore such an individual, or to provide only cursory information, is to invite a report that is magnified in its shortcomings and inaccuracies.

Finally, an arts program should work with the evaluator to ensure that an effective report is presented to the sponsoring agency/administration. This means that every effort should be made to ensure that accurate, fair content is in evidence. However, artists should check their impulse to become intrusively involved in the style of the report. Artists will naturally wish to see the report presented in artistic terms, but if they are successful in advocating this, an important strategic opportunity may be lost. An evaluation can serve as an opportunity for an outside expert to communicate the worth of the program to an educational agency/administration in the administrator's own language. Both the perceived credibility of the evaluator and the increased efficiency of communication allowed by such writing can be extremely useful to an arts program in advocating its cause. Therefore, artists should work with the evaluator to assist in the translation of artistic concepts into the most effective semantic style possible. This process takes

time and patience as well, but it can be the last piece of the puzzle whereby an otherwise bothersome outside evaluation can be employed as a vehicle for effective arts advocacy.

* * * * *

It may be true that the arts are less fully understood by the educational establishment than many other disciplines. And it may be true that many of the traditional methods of program evaluation are more dubious in application to the arts than to many other disciplines. Nevertheless, two factors seem evident in the field of arts education as we begin the nineties: arts education (along with education in general) is being held to progressively more rigorous standards of accountability; and arts education is in dire need of active, effective and inspired advocacy on all levels. It is the arts educators' considerable challenge to bring his/her creativity to bear in such a way that the former can be used as a means to achieve the later. While it may be true that "our ability to dream goes beyond our ability to explain" (Heussenstamm, 1987 pg. 44), perhaps by explaining at least part of our artistic dream, we might be given the resources to dream more boldly in the future.

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